

#### CHAPTER 8

From *The Asian Pacific American Journal* 7, no. 1 (Spring-Summer 1998): 100–9.

#### CHAPTER 9

An early version appeared in the *Journal for Cultural Research* (Jan. 2006).

#### CHAPTER 10

Selections from the author's previous volumes of *God Kissing Carrion: Selected Poems 1954–1964*; *The Exorcism and Other Poems* (1967); *The Ashes of Pedro Abad Santos and Other Poems* (1985). Some of the poems have been translated into Russian by Professor Vladimir Makarenko and into Chinese by the editorial staff of *The Chinese Poetry International Quarterly* (Chongqing, China), edited by Dr. Zhang Zhi.

#### CHAPTER 11

Internet version: <<http://www.pahlbooks.com/juan.htm>>. An early version is found in *Discourse* 23, no. 3 (Fall 2001): 52–74; and also in *Diliman Review* 51, nos. 1–2 (2003): 5–22. Reprinted with permission of the editors of *Discourse*.

#### CHAPTER 12

An early version is "Fragments from a Filipino Exile's Journal," *Amerasia Journal* 23, no. 2 (1997): 1–25. Accessible in the Internet journal, *Our Own Voice*, edited by Reme Grefalda: <<http://www.oovrag.com/essays/essay2005b-1.shtml>>

For information about the author and recent works relevant to the essays included in this volume, the reader can surf the Internet and check the following Web sites:

<[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/E.\\_San\\_Juan%2C\\_Jr.](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/E._San_Juan%2C_Jr.)>

<<http://rizalarchive.blogspot.com>>

<<http://sonnysj.blogspot.com>>

<<http://nyc.indymedia.org/en/2007/05/86217.html>>

<<http://www.countercurrents.org/juan150507.htm>>

## PREFATORY NOTE

*Balikbayang Sinta* is the fourth book of mine to be published by the Ateneo de Manila University Press. The first one, *Subversions of Desire: Prolegomena to Nick Joaquin* (1988; now out of print), was followed by *History and Form* (1996), and a collection of my poems in Filipino, *Alay sa Paglikha ng Bukang-liwayway* (2000). This present volume inaugurates a new millennium of embarkations, journeys, and homecomings. Although it might be somewhat inappropriate to designate this miscellany as a "Reader"—the alternative rubric "Sampler" evokes the image of a confectionary dish without tartness or acidity, the author's intractable passage through the threshold of a half-century's history may be enough reason to violate propriety and conventional expectations.

Although—to repeat Mallarmé—a throw of the dice will never abolish chance, and meanings are permanently unstable, the chronology of one's life seems unalterable. One's personal history (like any sign) is always an arena of conflict, an enduring agon. I was born on the eve of World War II, grew up in the period of "Liberation" and the Hukbalahap uprising, and served apprenticeship in the days of Ramon Magsaysay, the local McCarthy witch-hunts, and the debate over the Rizal bill in the late 1950s. I left in 1960 to continue my graduate work at Harvard University, returning in 1965–1966 to teach at the University of the Philippines (UP). The trajectory of the texts included here encompasses the last quarter of the twentieth century, from the nationalist resurgence in the 1960s and the struggle against the Marcos dictatorship to the restoration of elite rule after February 1986. Nick Joaquin is dead, but *Subversions of Desire* uncannily lives on as an enigmatic *genius loci* to haunt the ivory towers of Orientalizing scholars and Makati dilettantes. In two years, when I reach 70, I won't write any more apologies or eulogies to contemporaries most of whom have passed away. What

I envisage foreshadowing here is a preemptive settling of accounts, wistfully a dialogue with a rising generation of activists terrorized by the moribund Arroyo regime. In any case, a historical/archival framework might be useful for students, reviewers, and Establishment sleuths.

The original subtitle of this volume is "A Project for Rendezvous and Reconnaissance." First, a reconnaissance. Most of the essays were written in the last two decades, beginning with "Writing and the Asian Diaspora" just after the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, to the "Battle of Seattle" at the end of the last century. The last two chapters mark the upsurge of the antiglobalization movement up to September 11, 2001, the advent of the "Global War on Terrorism" now led by a militaristic Homeland Security State, the United States of America. The essay, "Imperialist War on Terrorism and the Responsibility of Cultural Studies," registers the interruption of 9/11 as a pivotal event in late modernity and our passage to the end of neocolonial (not postcolonial) innocence. The core of this essay was delivered as a lecture at a public forum at the Ateneo de Manila University in January 2002 (for which honor I would like to thank Professors Lulu Torres, Benilda Santos, Isabel Pefianco Martin, and Dean Leo Garcia).

Since 9/11 and "People Power 2," significant transformations have occurred around the world, despite the devastation wrought by US aggression in Iraq and Afghanistan. I am referring in particular to Venezuela under Hugo Chavez (our visit in March 2006 confirmed the momentous gains of the Bolivarian revolution) and the Maoist "People's War" in Nepal, among others. In our country, the bold experiment of Bayan Muna in parliamentary politics signals a pivotal change, despite the horrendous atrocities inflicted on its members by the paramilitary forces of the current regime. Amid these contradictions, I would like to cite the British political scien-

tist Pauline Eadie's remark that feudal class stratification, "the familial bureaucracy of the ruling elite, and the accepted norms of nepotism and corruption" persist in maintaining poverty and exacerbating injustice throughout the Philippines (*Poverty and the Critical Security Agenda*, 2005). By all testimonies of local and international observers, repression is now worse than in the dark days of the Marcos dictatorship (1972–1986). Some things change, some remain the same. In this retrospective mode, I selected some poems from my previous volumes (all now out of print) to give some existential anchorage to the last two essays dealing with the Filipino diaspora and the life-and-death struggle of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) to survive with dignity and preserve their identity as Filipinos. The presence of 10 million OFWs around the world is an unprecedented world-historical phenomenon whose remittance and political awakening will surely produce decisive changes in the culture and sociopolitical physiognomy of the Republic in the next few decades.

Nonetheless, the balance sheet remains to be drawn up. It may be a long way from the time when I was censored for writing "Man is a Political Animal" in 1957. My coming-of-age perhaps dates back to the struggle for secular learning in the State University, for popular-democratic enlightenment, and for an intuitively radical, Filipinized version of modernism (Nietzsche, Joyce, T. S. Eliot, Wyndham Lewis, Pound, Sartre). With some reservations, I traced this in the two interviews with Joon Park and Mike Pozo. The American Marxist critic Michael Denning, in his *Culture in the Age of Three Worlds* (2004), considers me a "New Left" intellectual. Of course, in the US scenario, anyone opposed to the status quo, including "Soviet revisionism" then, somehow ended up in that category. Actually we (I count myself among a generation of exiled or expatriated Filipinos in the United States from the 1960s on) became national democrats in the 1960s and socialists in the course of the anti-mar-

tial law movement in the 1970s and 1980s in the imperial metropole. My genealogy, however, really goes back to the process of decolonization begun by Amado Hernandez, Jose Lansang, Jose P. Laurel, Claro M. Recto, Lorenzo Tañada, and Renato Constantino in the 1950s all the way up to the national-democratic flourishing in the late 1960s and 1970s. My source of inspiration when I was a student at the Jose Abad Santos High School in the 1950s, long before I read Marx, Lenin, Lukacs, and Gramsci, was Salvador P. Lopez's classic text, *Literature and Society* (1940). The US-Marcos dictatorship and my participation in the anti-martial law struggle in the US would be the relevant contexts underlying my research program concerning racial/ethnic relations in the US, "transnational" cultural studies, intensifying crisis in the Filipino community, postcolonial discourse and criticism, and the emergent heterogeneous culture of the Filipino diaspora.

The itinerary sketched above condenses many complex, intricate stages in the interest of brevity. One guiding thread linking all these stages in the process of reconnaissance may be expressed by way of Walter Benjamin's maxim, proposing some kind of rendez-vous glimpsed in the Eastern horizon: "The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the 'state of emergency' in which we live is not the exception but the rule. We must attain to a conception of history that is in keeping with this insight. Then we shall clearly realize that it is our task to bring about a real state of emergency" ("Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, 1968). The exemplary labor organizer Philip Vera Cruz once said that the everyday life of Filipinos in the United States was a perpetual state of emergency. It is with this in mind that I subtitled the last essay here "Emergency Signals from a Filipino Exile."

To be sure, Joyce's famous shibboleth of "silence, exile, and cunning" has long been made obsolete by progressive militants like Pablo Manlapit, Pedro Calosa, Chris Mensalvas; by Filipinos who

led the 1965 Delano grape strike; and by Filipino national democrats protesting the Iraq War in the capitals of North America and Europe, as well as in Hong Kong, Vancouver, Sydney, Manila, and elsewhere. We are today in a more profound crisis than in September 1972 when Marcos declared martial law and stirred a whole generation to join the ranks of the New People's Army. The regular flight of a million Filipinos every year for jobs abroad is a mute testimony to this crisis. As former UP president Francisco Nemenzo Jr. states in his "Laban ng Masa" manifesto, we are witnessing the crisis of the entire system of elite rule for which a transitional revolutionary government becomes imperative. This collection of essays hopes to contribute to making this transition to an egalitarian, just, independent, and genuinely democratic society possible.

I would like to record here my indebtedness to Professor Pinghui Liao of the National Tsing Hua University, Director Yu-cheng Lee of the Academia Sinica, and all my other colleagues in Taiwan for collegial dialogue and exchanges in November–December 2004. Previously, I had the opportunity to serve as a Fulbright lecturer in the Faculteit van de Letteren of the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium; I want to thank Professors Victor Doyen and Theo D'Haen, as well as Dr. Eric Hertog of the Lessius Hogeschool, Antwerp, for their help and hospitality. I want to record my gratitude to the following for encouragement and various assistance: Delia Aguilar, Lulu Torres-Reyes, Karina Bolasco, Esther Pacheco, Marra Lanot, Joseph Lim, Jorshi Sonza, Michael Viola, Roland Simbulan, Roland Tolentino, Fe and Roger Mangahas, Clodualdo del Mundo Jr., Shayne and Bienvenido Lumbea, Elmer and Elenita Ordoñez, Francisco and Princess Nemenzo, Tomas Talledo, Soledad Reyes, Dennis Guevarra, Rosario Bella Guzman, Carol Pagaduan-Araullo, Margot Orendain, Ramon Castañeda, Mariel Francisco; comrades in the *Philippine Forum*, New York; *Sandiwa*, Seattle; and *CONTEND*, Philippines; Sam Noumoff, Kenneth Bauzon, Arif Dirlik,

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Finally, I would like to thank all the editors and publishers of the following journals and Internet sites that sponsored the original versions of the work included here for permission to use materials that first appeared in those venues: *Journal for Cultural Research*, *Philippine Collegian*, *Diliman Review*, *St. John's Humanities Review*, *Socialism and Democracy*, *Left Curve*, *Arena*, *Philippine Studies*, *World Literature Today*, *Kritika Kultura*, *Red Critique*, *Political Affairs*, *The Asian Pacific American Journal*, *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, *Planet Philippines*, *Dissenting Voices*, *Axis of Logic*, *PALHE-zine*, and *Dialogue and Initiative*.

– ESJ

## CHAPTER ONE

# REFLECTIONS ON POSTCOLONIAL THEORY AND POSTMODERNITY: AN INTERVIEW

### 1. What is Postcolonial Theory and how do you use a Marxist perspective to critique it?

Based on the orthodox tenets laid out by Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak—the “founding fathers” of this discursive territory, postcolonial theory seeks to explain the ambivalent and hybrid nature of subjects, their thinking and behavior, in the former colonies of the Western imperial powers, mainly the British Commonwealth societies. It seeks to prove that the colonial enterprise was not just a one-way affair of oppression and exploitation, but a reciprocal or mutual co- or interdetermination of both metropolitan master and “third world” subaltern.

Whatever the subtle differences among mainstream postcolonial critics, they all agree that colonialism, for all its terror and barbarism, presents a rhetorical and philosophical anomaly: the postcolonial subject as identical and different from the history textbook's portrayal of the submissive and silent victim of imperial conquest. It claims to be more sophisticated or “profound” than the usual Left or even liberal explanation of colonialism.

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With Mike Pozo, editor, *St. John's University Humanities Review*, conducted on 23 Jan. 2003.



Obviously this is a riposte to the conventional view that imperialism produced the dehumanization, if not decimation, of colonized peoples. Not just Marxists, but also liberals and enlightened people generally subscribe to this view.

First of all, one should reject the "Cold War" view of Marxism as equivalent to economic determinism, stalinist tyranny, and the like. Marxism cannot be reduced to such inanities. Synoptically, the Marxist critique is multileveled: first, postcolonialists obscure or erase historical determination in favor of rhetorical and linguistic idealization of the colonial experience; second, the postcolonialist mind refuses to be self-critical and assumes a self-righteous dogmatism that it is infallible and cannot be refuted; and third, the practical effect of postcolonialist prejudice is the unwitting justification of, if not apology for, the continued neocolonialist—"globalizing" is the trendy epithet—depredation of non-Western peoples, in particular indigenous groups, women, and urban poor in Latin America, Asia, and Africa.

In sum, postcolonialism rejects the historical-materialist critique of imperialism in favor of a highly suspicious and even demagogic claim to rescue the postcolonial subject from its own abject past. Have they succeeded? I doubt it. I find this kind of postcolonial theory an alibi for intellectual acquiescence to current hegemonic pieties.

2. *Is Poststructuralism/Postcolonial Theory, in fact, ineffective for "third world," or "minority," critics of what you today call Neocolonialism? Why? And what exactly is meant by Neocolonialism?*

This question is an excellent posing of the strategic value of any theory purporting to advance the interests of those marginalized or subordinated by the global status quo. It can only be answered in terms of specific situations and protagonists.

Let me try a general answer. I should emphasize that my focus is on the orthodox brand of postcolonial theory that is safely marketed in the classrooms and scholarly conferences. Now, the postcolonial approach of Edward Said is to be distinguished from the scholastic verbal magic of Bhabha and Spivak for its clarity of historical reference and political thrust. Its resonance is clear: its critique of US imperialist hegemony, especially in the Middle East, cannot be doubted (although it is silent about "internal colonialism" in the US itself). It has provided weapons for oppositional "minority" intellectuals. It has been useful in "conscientizing" (Paulo Freire's term) a larger audience than those addressed by Derrida or Foucault.

To my mind, however, it is less poststructural or postcolonial idealization that drives Said's discourse; rather, it is his sensitive and informed understanding of neocolonialism as a political regime and behavioral pattern (or "habitus," to use Pierre Bourdieu's term) of continued dominance of nominally independent nation-states through neoliberal, transnational disguises, as mediated through the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and World Trade Organization.

I understand neocolonialism as the domination of peoples and societies by capital (primarily Western, but including Japan) through the liberal market and other ideological means, not through direct political rule. It is the practice of exploitation and oppression of the majority of the world's laboring masses under the guise of democratic access to markets, the free flow of commodities, technology, ideas, bodies, and so on. We need to translate the abstraction "neocolonialism" into concrete empirical situations. We have to specify various neocolonialist practices in every region or place where the ascendancy of corporate transnational capital generates effects of misery, violations of human rights, rape, malnutrition, genocide, and so on. There are probably as many neocolonialisms as

postcolonialisms. Contradictions prod  
and his gravedigger, as the dialectic w  
through our own collective and indivic

3. *In your book Beyond Postcolonial T  
alternative to this theory. By reexam  
in the "postcolonial" world, do you  
movements unlike, say, Edward Sai  
intellectual?*

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on the same discursive terrain, unfortu  
use the same Christian framework in t  
from within. This is not a novel insight.  
dialectics.

My method is open to conflicting  
my attempt to reaffirm the moment of  
within the postcolonial period can be  
tion of postcolonialism entirely, or a  
vision. In any case, I am not alone in  
Benita Parry, Neil Lazarus, Neil Larser  
completed this move brilliantly. I refe  
volume edited by Crystal Bartolovich  
*Marxism, Modernity and Postcolonial Stu*  
Press, 2002).

Although I have criticized his inad  
consider Edward Said's commitment o  
determination—a "nationalism" differe  
geois elements—as a progressive one  
the face of Israeli state terrorism. (Said  
complex and cannot be discussed her  
Said's status as a diasporic intellectual  
actual political and ethical activities.

One needs to be reminded again  
of Puerto Ricans or Filipinos against  
me as the nationalism of the USA Pa-  
and the streamlined chauvinism un-  
holarship.

recent book *Racism and Cultural Studies*  
diaspora of migrant workers" and the "im-  
development globally" as further evidence  
of Postcolonial Theory. Can you say more

Postcolonial Theory cannot explain, say,  
in Filipinos working abroad as "over-  
paid, maltreated, raped, and killed—  
Sri Lankans, Bangladeshi, Mexicans,  
Latin Americans—then it is useless for  
will simply be an academic exercise to  
e, to reinforce ongoing plans for pre-  
istan, Iran, North Korea, Cuba, Ven-  
ormations deemed accomplices o  
in the words of the current "helms-  
it obsolescent superpower.

Wrong: I don't see Bhabha or his nu-  
being too much disturbed by the  
ce against Arab Americans, or any-  
Osama bin Laden. In this momen  
fascism" tearing its head behind  
sanitarian" slogans, there is a great  
to demonstrate that they care, that  
d ethical conscience (which, with  
every chance they get).

postcolonialisms. Contradictions produce opposites, the exploiter and his gravedigger, as the dialectic works its way remorselessly, through our own collective and individual actions.

3. *In your book Beyond Postcolonial Theory, you describe a possible alternative to this theory. By reexamining writers/revolutionaries in the "postcolonial" world, do you find validity in Nationalist movements unlike, say, Edward Said and his role as a diasporic intellectual?*

In arguing with orthodox postcolonialism, one has to operate on the same discursive terrain, unfortunately, just as Milton had to use the same Christian framework in trying to upset and subvert it from within. This is not a novel insight. It is, one might say, a law of dialectics.

My method is open to conflicting interpretations. Of course, my attempt to reaffirm the moment of national-liberation struggles within the postcolonial period can be grasped either as a repudiation of postcolonialism entirely, or a re-articulation of its original vision. In any case, I am not alone in doing this; my colleagues Benita Parry, Neil Lazarus, Neil Larsen, and many others have accomplished this move brilliantly. I refer your readers to the recent volume edited by Crystal Bartolovich and Neil Lazarus, entitled *Marxism, Modernity and Postcolonial Studies* (Cambridge University Press, 2002).

Although I have criticized his inadequate views on Marxism, I consider Edward Said's commitment on behalf of Palestinian self-determination—a "nationalism" different from Arafat and the bourgeois elements—as a progressive one that should be supported in the face of Israeli state terrorism. (Said's situation, certainly, is very complex and cannot be discussed here in depth.) In this context, Said's status as a diasporic intellectual is very much defined by his actual political and ethical activities.

As for the nationalist thematic! One needs to be reminded again that the nationalist struggles of Puerto Ricans or Filipinos against US imperialism is not the same as the nationalism of the USA Patriot Act of George W. Bush and the streamlined chauvinism underlying American studies scholarship.

4. *Furthermore, in your most recent book Racism and Cultural Studies you speak about the "forced diaspora of migrant workers" and the "import of uneven and combined development globally" as further evidence of the futility or inability of Postcolonial Theory. Can you say more about this?*

Insofar as mainstream Postcolonial Theory cannot explain, say, the phenomenon of 10 million Filipinos working abroad as "overseas contract workers," poorly paid, maltreated, raped, and killed—this observation also applies to Sri Lankans, Bangladeshi, Mexicans, and millions of Africans and Latin Americans—then it is useless for any emancipatory politics. It will simply be an academic exercise to advance careers, and, of course, to reinforce ongoing plans for preemptive wars on Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, North Korea, Cuba, Venezuela, and other national formations deemed accomplices or accessories to the "axis of evil," in the words of the current "helmsman" of the only remaining but obsolescent superpower.

Please correct me if I am wrong: I don't see Bhabha or his numerous epigones and acolytes being too much disturbed by the current outrageous racist violence against Arab Americans, or anyone suspected of being linked to Osama bin Laden. In this moment of emergency, with "friendly fascism" rearing its head behind neoliberal and putatively "humanitarian" slogans, there is a great opportunity for postcolonialists to demonstrate that they care, that they have historical efficacy and ethical conscience (which, with unfazed hubris, they celebrate at every chance they get).



Yet what I see, instead, is a call to return to aesthetics, to form, to the tired and empty clichés about humanism, which one would think have been laid to rest by the three decades of deconstruction, poststructuralist innovations, among others—signs of the contradictory milieu we live in.

Unfortunately we've returned to the time of the terrible metanarratives, this time the metanarrative of United States triumphalism, the imperialist "Homeland Security State."

5. *Much of your work has dealt with cultural studies (CS), however, you're originally from a literature background. Given the shortcomings of Postcolonial Theory, how would you conceive of a manner to study literature from the perspectives of "third world" and "minority" readers, students, and scholars?*

I think this is being done gradually—one can cite Paul Lauter's heroic attempt to diversify or democratize the US literary canon, though it is by mechanical addition, less a thoroughgoing decentering of a monolithic and hegemonic exceptionalism. The numerous projects of transnationalization of American studies, the fashionable conferences on postnationalism and cosmopolitanism, the continuing debates on multiculturalism—these are all symptoms of the crisis of the old "common culture" dispensation. Everyone participating in the intellectual conversation on the transformation of the humanities is aware that there is no going back, that we need to be answerable and responsible.

However, the neoconservatives have temporarily won under the regime of the war on terrorism, don't you think? Yet they have not eliminated the contradictions, especially the contradiction between labor and capital.

I believe literary study and scholarship can be reinvigorated through a comparative and interdisciplinary approach—nothing radical, to be sure. Unfortunately, comparativist and interdisciplinary

scholars still cling to a belief that their "civilization," in short, the liberal democracy based on private ownership and the exploitation of surplus value—the rampant neoliberalism of the market—is the necessary foundation of all these revisions and changes in the academy. You can detect this in many oppositional critiques of current scholarship and intellectual fashions.

As long as one clings to this belief in private property and the right to exploit others—the sacred rules of the free market—any reform in literary or cultural studies will suffer from what Georg Lukacs has called "reification." In short, it is not just using a "third world," or minority, perspective that is necessary or essential. For such "third world" mentality might just be mimicking consumerist values and habits, as they often do (I just visited the Philippines where "mallng" is the prime occupation of millions, thanks to globalizing corporate blessings).

First things first. What is needed is the overthrow of the "free market" rooted in inequality, private property, and hierarchy. That is the prerequisite to any genuine and creative transformation of the human sciences dedicated to the liberation of the spiritual and material energies of every individual on this endangered planet. I hope this does not sound too prophetic or evangelical in the pejorative sense.

6. *You have described US nationalism as the "opium of the masses," could you elaborate on this?*

The allusion here is, of course, to Marx's famous ambiguous quote on religion. US nationalism—that the United States is superior to any society or that Western Civilization as embodied in the institutions of the US has a privileged position over others—has operated as the means of exacting consent from the majority of citizens. Of course, it operates subtly. It does not proclaim itself as such. When anyone speaks of how US representative democracy should



be the pattern in other countries, there you have an example of the "opium" working.

In general, as many have noted, US movies do it all the time, especially as the chief agency of propaganda—education, if you feel that's too harsh a comment—that exercises enormous influence on the consumers in the dependencies and peripheries. Now, just as Marx called religion "the opium of the masses," it has another side: it offers consolation, strength, hope of renewal in the interstices of civil society. Unfortunately, like drugs, the feeling of consolation doesn't last. Now, the postnationalist Americanists argue that this nationalism no longer exists. I wonder what they would say about the USA Patriot Act and other anticonstitutional State diktat after September 11?

Are we postnationalist yet?

7. *Can you describe the differences/similarities between US nationalism and that of "third world" nationalism?*

I already responded to this earlier. However, this bears repeating: The most important criterion is whether the sense of national unity benefits the majority of laboring citizens, or this sense is utilized by the ruling class, a small minority of rich folk who control the business world, to promote their own profit-making interests. There will always be group solidarity, it's a fact of sociality. However, the question is: for what? What's the meaning of this togetherness and belonging?

As I said, the nationalism (if you can call it the sovereignty struggle) of native Hawaiians, for example, cannot be equated with the nationalism of the White and/or Japanese elite in Hawaii. Nor can the nationalism of the Moral Majority, of Pat Buchanan and Cheney, be conflated with the nationalism of the East Timorese, or for that matter to the nationalism of the Zapatistas, the guerillas in

Colombia, Nepal, Peru, and elsewhere, the New People's Army in the Philippines (the last one recently declared "terrorist" by Colin Powell). All nationalisms are similar in that they try to arouse the sense of ethnic togetherness and solidarity. Yet the difference is: for whose benefit? What is at stake? Who are victimized? What goals of human liberation are promoted or damaged by nationalist activities?

Again, we need to be historically concrete and specific, as we should be when answering questions about theory, literature, and so on.

8. *What are some of the questions/issues students and professors interested in CS should ask concerning the notion of "multiculturalism," which for many in this country may sound like a good thing?*

This question deserves a long substantial answer. Here I can only begin with a preliminary remark: I agree with Manning Marable that we should fight for a multicultural democracy. In contrast to the belief current in the 1950s and earlier that the US is a homogenous society founded on Anglo-Saxon culture, and Western civilization (Christianity, the Great Books of the Western World, etc.), the idea of multiculturalism is a refreshing and potentially liberating one. US society cannot be subsumed into one ethnic group or culture. That is historically false, completely unwarranted, and violently genocidal, besides mortgaging the future to the destructive tribal idols.

Unfortunately the ideal of multiculturalism has been hijacked by sweet-talking neoliberals. As I have argued in my earlier book, *Hegemony and Strategies of Transgression* (SUNY Press), and my recent *Racism and Cultural Studies* (Duke University Press), multiculturalism has been appropriated to vindicate neoliberal policies and instrumentalities. In short, the US ruling class takes pride

in the preemptive and preventive hegemony of the United States because it is multicultural, diverse, open, sensitive to differences—difference as a guarantee of uniformity and democratic oneness.

This multiculturalism is an alibi for predatory globalization, which is the euphemism for the further extension of corporate exploitation everywhere. If this is multiculturalism, then we can all stop reading Foucault and Lacan and instead go shopping and marvel at the infinite variety of multicultural goods—not just food but opinions, fashions, styles, images, simulacra, disposable theories, and others.

Baudrillard may still be right about the exorbitant terrorism of the postmodern marketplace.

However, if multiculturalism signifies a sensitivity and openness to the Other so that the notion of identity is itself problematized—I am thinking here of Alain Badiou's critique of identity politics and alterity—I have no quarrel with such a program of genuine, creative multiculturalism.

Finally, I would like to reiterate that in all my works I try to apply a historical-materialist approach that considers human labor (both mental and physical) as the key to the critical transformation of society in the direction of democratic socialism and eventually, in some perhaps utopian future, a global communist ecumene. It is a point of departure, not the answer to every question. In this I join other socialists and radicals working within the intellectual tradition of Benedict de Spinoza, Georg Lukacs, Antonio Gramsci, Rosa Luxemburg, Walter Benjamin, C.L.R. James, and others in advancing the cause of all those throughout the world who continue to be victimized by the "free market." Is there any other feasible alternative?

## CHAPTER TWO

### IMPERIALIST WAR ON TERRORISM AND THE RESPONSIBILITY OF CULTURAL STUDIES

There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism.

—Walter Benjamin

In the dawn, armed with a burning patience, we shall enter the splendid Cities [A l'aurore, armes d'une ardente patience, nous entrerons aux splendid Villes].

—Arthur Rimbaud

When we left the US on 8 December 2002, everyone was betting on when the war, rather the US invasion of Iraq for regime change and the capture of huge oil reserves, would begin. The plot unfolds inexorably. But the real question was: When did the war really begin? Was September 11, 2001, the day of reckoning, a singular event out of which history was born? An antiapocalypse? The long-awaited advent of what?

Here we are in 2003, the beginning of another year of hope. However, do we have that "burning patience" to continue the struggle for change? for radical social transformation? Before we can revisit the goals of national democracy and liberation, for genuine equality and social justice, I want to situate myself in the circumstantial web of what's going on, the thickness of the historical process.

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Revised text of a lecture part of which was delivered at the Ateneo de Manila University, 7 Jan. 2003, sponsored by the Departments of Filipino and of English.

# WRITING AND THE ASIAN DIASPORA: AN INTERVIEW

With Joon Park, University of Indiana, Bloomington (for *The Asian Pacific American Journal* [1998])

1. *How do we go about classifying Asian American literature. Are there issues or themes that the literature must focus upon? For example, Ishiguro (a Japanese native) wrote "Remains of the Day." Should that be classified as Japanese-English literature?*

For all "minority" writers, language is a political question. While the linguistic base for Asian American writers remains American English, the literary mode is constantly being modified. Ishiguro's work is, in my view, legitimately part of literature written in an "English" that is undergoing global changes. It's part of diasporic literature written in English by a writer of Japanese ancestry domiciled in UK, dealing with experiences in the UK. Salman Rushdie's work, although it focuses on the histories of India or Pakistan, is also part of this diasporic literature that links times, spaces, events, collectivities, among others.

Neither subject-matter nor medium alone can dictate the criteria for classification. But why classify? We need to ask the reasons for this impulse to "divide and master."

2. *What type of things do you discern when you merit "good" Asian American literature? (Perhaps I'm making too many structuralist assumptions here.)*

"Good" is a term that postmodernists (and I am not one) have prohibited as not "politically correct." However, I think writing that reflects—of course, in highly mediated ways—the histories of various Asian communities, their complex interaction with the dominant society, their individual predicaments and prospects, would be useful for students of color who need to understand where they're coming from, what kind of alliances they need, especially where they want to go.

This is one way of exploring its pedagogical function in terms of configuring "identity politics." This recurrent "identity" crisis is a product of a system that enunciates difference into hierarchies of race, gender, class, and so on.

I think Asian American writing needs to contribute to the radical transformation of consciousness in a racist-patriarchal system. There's no particular subject, theme, or style that can be privileged for this purpose because the situations of readers and writers are contingent and infinitely diverse. What's important is to historicize both the reading and writing situation.

3. *What types of approaches should a reader take when reading Asian American literature, if there is one. For example, Asian American literature often focuses on the issue of ethnic identity, and the internal contestation of the author usually becomes apparent. Should we pay closer attention to authorial intention?*

I would propose a historical-materialist approach. The parameters of the act of communication should be taken into account: author, reader, circumstance, various subtending forces, and others. Authorial intention is only one of the aspects that can serve as a



stimulating point of departure, although (as D. H. Lawrence warned us), trust the tale, not the teller.

The reason why the question of ethnic identity comes up in "ethnic" writing is, I think, a function of the exclusion, marginalization, segregation, and segmentation of these non-White communities enforced by the racializing state and its cultural apparatuses.

Of course, today, with the emergence of White studies, Norman Mailer can claim to be an ethnic writer, and the entire hegemonic corpus of American literature can be presented as multicultural and ethnically diverse. But then one begins to be suspicious of this free-market notion of multiculturalism.

4. *Who are the great Asian American writers, and what can we learn from them? What Asian American writers do you believe should be in the canon, but are not?*

I am not in the business of setting up canons, like Henry Louis Gates and company. This is a collective enterprise, maybe already decided by Asian American careerists, timeservers, and sundry opportunists.

Canons are formed by institutional practices of reading and writing usually determined by the nature of the struggle between the hegemonic power and the forces resisting it. No single individual makes up the canon of legitimate and authorized texts. Often it is a compromise between residual, dominant, and emergent social forces contesting the ideological/cultural terrain in any historical period.

In my teaching practice I usually choose texts that can address the historical issues and problems of the different communities, in particular how the US racial and gendered system acted on them, their variegated responses, and the like. I have no problem teaching the "canonical" writers Maxine Hong Kingston, Toshio Mori,

Joy Kogawa, Carlos Bulosan, Hisaye Yamamoto, Bharati Mukherjee—I particularly like Kim Ronyoung's *Clay Walls*, a major text now displaced by the favorite of postmodernists, Theresa Cha's *Dictee*. I find Frank Chin's plays and novels extremely useful side by side with Fae Ng's *Bone*.

Critical voices are just emerging from the Filipino community, younger contemporaries of Jessica Hagedorn like R. Zamora Linmark and Nick Carbo. I also find *M Butterfly* by David Henry Hwang useful in introducing the "orientalizing" of Asian bodies, especially when juxtaposed with *Miss Saigon*, the recent reincarnation of the Puccini archetype.

Again, however, this has to be placed within a historical field—such as the one outlined by Glenn Omatsu. (Omatu's "historical field" refers to the 1980–1990 period when Asian American neoconservatives in California and elsewhere, changed the hitherto defensive or marginalized position of Asian Americans and began to be political players or actors while maintaining the old traditional patriarchal order, the "orientalist" logic of Western power, in the community. Omatsu's essay is suggestive in describing these complex changes in which White supremacy continues to exoticize Asian bodies while allowing the fungible aura of multiculturalism or ethnic difference within policed, safe limits—in particular, within the "model minority" framework of utilitarian individualism.)

With the post-1965 contingent of US-based Filipinos, a new generation of Filipino scholars and critics are emerging (I can only mention a few such as Mike Viola, Jeffrey Cabusao, Anne Lacsamana, Kenneth Bauzon, Lester Ruiz, Jorshinelle Sonza, Daya Mortel) who will participate in the revision of the canon. It's time Filipinos are heard and paid attention to. Their innovativeness resides not in their diverse personal idioms and styles; rather it inheres in their critical vision of the global material conditions that link the Philippine crisis with the vicissitudes of US transnational



capitalism and the alienation/reification that characterizes all cultural practices across race, class, gender, sexuality, and so on, in this society.

Having had the "privilege" of being the most violently subjugated group of Asians in the Pacific Rim by US power, Filipinos may also have some unique insights into the nature of this experience. They may be able to register the new changes going on in US-Philippine relations and in the Pacific Rim that may contradict the neoconservative wisdom expressed, say, in Samuel Huntington's thesis of the war of civilizations and the need to preserve US Western purity. And this has profound implications for not only Asian Pacific Americans but also for the entire United States society.

5. *What makes Asian American literature distinct from other "minority" literature?*

Asian American literature is distinctive, say, from African American and Chicano only in the way US imperial power impinged on the homelands of the various groups and in the way each group was incorporated into the racial formation. That is why one cannot homogenize all of the texts as "Asian American" in much the same way you can more or less take Black literature, from the slave narratives and Fredrick Douglas to Richard Wright and Toni Morrison as one distinct continuous body. Not Asian American writing. For one, the experiences of colonization of Filipinos and, in another way, of Vietnamese, Kampuchians, and Laotians would set them apart from the Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans.

No doubt there are similarities, affinities, and commonalities that these cultures have in responding to the racial/imperial state; we can point them out and learn from them lessons in organizing coalitions, alliances, and the like. Much more instructive and catalyzing are the differences due to specific historical conditions.

6. *What do you remember about the Philippines when you were there? Are there any certain books that recapitulate this experience?*

The Philippines in the 1950s, when I was in the university, was a neocolony of the United States, dependent economically, politically, and culturally. Cold War McCarthyism in its local version suppressed dissent and critical thinking throughout the society.

The centennial of the Philippine Revolution and the Filipino-American War (1899–1902) that began with the annexation of the Philippines by the United States in 1898 should remind everyone that of all the Asian countries, the Philippines was the only one subjected to enormous violence and ideological pacification by the entire state machinery of the United States. One can probably say the same thing about IndoChina—metaphorically speaking, we Filipinos share the existential predicament of the "boat people"—but, as I say this, over six million Filipino "overseas contract workers" are now virtually refugees so that our diaspora, an unprecedented historic development, rearticulates and at the same time subverts the "immigrant" paradigm in a way that reveals the contradictory nature of globalized, flexible capitalism.

The Cold War defined my education: We learned New Criticism, idolized Ernest Hemingway and T. S. Eliot, rejected socialist or even realist writing, shunned away from politics and social problems, and so on.

Meanwhile, the US-supported Filipino ruling elite suppressed the majority of Filipinos who were unlettered peasants and workers; corruption continued and worsened, class inequalities sharpened, poverty and oppression were deemed "natural" and eternal, thanks to the indoctrination of the church, Hollywood, and US mass media. However, the resistance shown by the Huk uprising in the 1940s and 1950s smoldered and caught fire in the late 1960s and early 1970s with student youth revolts and the rise of the New People's Army. When I was a student in the University of the Phil-

ippines, I participated in the nationalist movement led by Claro Recto and Lorenzo Tañada.

With this background, when I came to this country in 1960, the writings of Bulosan (which I discovered late in 1965 when I began teaching at the University of California, Davis) affected me in a provocative way. I had read Villa, Bienvenido Santos, and others, but they were all self-apologists in one way or another; only Bulosan was able to address those experiences and conditions that linked the Philippines and the United States from 1898 up to the present.

Filipinos then subsisted on what Paulo Freire called the “culture of silence” until the anti-martial law movement in the 1960s afforded space for Filipinos born here to participate in acts of transgression and rebellion.

Freire, the Brazilian revolutionary educator, described the culture of the impoverished peasants in Brazil—and by implication of the Third World—as one which is distinguished by “silence.” That doesn’t mean that unlettered peasants couldn’t speak, are passive, mute, and so on.

The plight of the “silent” victims stems from historical, man-made circumstances. The “hewers of wood and drawers of water,” to use a cliché, have been deprived of the weapon of words, the “print capitalism” Benedict Anderson considered as essential to the birth of nationalist consciousness, so that no matter how versatile and sharp their oral communication might be, the Western imperial system, or the knowledge/production of instrumental rationality, consigned them to “silence.” Through his method of generative themes in literacy education, Freire was able to make that “silence” speak in a language that accompanied the conscious practice of subalterns attempting to transform life-conditions. Freire was challenged by the fact that the resources of peasants and workers in the Third World were being channeled to reinforce their oppression rather than mobilized for their own good.

So the “silence” of the “wretched of the earth,” to use Frantz Fanon’s phrase, is perhaps louder and more articulate than the tired gibberish of “First World” consumerism and fashionable avant-gardism. (I think Freire continues to inspire many Filipino educators, particularly nuns and priests active in fashioning a Filipino “theology of liberation.”)

The first “waves” of Filipinos in the United States have not produced much in terms of written texts; their oral culture supported them in their daily lives, especially the first generation of “Manongs.” This is a problem of class domination and the silencing of the labor-segmented nationalities in late capitalism.

Only in the 1960s and 1970s do you find a new group—among them, Al Robles and Jessica Hagedorn—beginning to connect the Manongs and the Philippine neocolonial plight in their own singular voices. But then, after the 1965 change in immigration, you have a new generation of Filipino professionals and middle strata who have life-forms and orientations quite distinct from the migrant farm workers of Philip Vera Cruz’s time. Vera Cruz’s biography, now reconstituted by Sid Amores Valledor in his book *The Original Writings of Philip Vera Cruz* (Indianapolis, IN: Dog Ear Publishing, 2006; see also my booklet, *On the Presence of Filipinos in the United States*, Salinas, CA: Sarimanok, 2006), is “must” reading for all Filipino Americans and other people of color.

7. *Observing the effect of English-based United States literature on writers in the Philippines, do you believe writing in the vernacular really addresses the masses’ concerns, because the English-based speakers are coincidentally the elite?*

The enemy can also speak in the vernacular. In this context, language should be viewed as one potentially efficacious instrument in political mobilization. It depends on what is conveyed through it

English because I want to address a specific audience familiar with the ideas and issues I discuss. I also write in Filipino to communicate with the larger segment of the population interested in general questions of freedom, exploitation, and the radical transformation of social structures.

We have had decades of controversy over which language to use: this was partly solved in the 1970s when the New People's Army began using the vernacular in various regions to raise consciousness and organize people. Filipino (the evolving national language), which is accessible to millions, has now developed tremendously to the point of intellectuals producing works in philosophy, social theory, and scientific treatises.

English continues to be a "prestige" language used in the Congress, business, and elsewhere not because the most educated and elite Filipinos are the only ones engaged in serious conversation but because we are still a peripheral society dependent on global capitalist business and media whose language is English. Ideally, we need to use all languages to reach the widest audience that can be mobilized for emancipatory ends. And those who can use two or three languages would be much more effective; we shouldn't refuse versatility. Isn't the emerging global culture of the Internet multilingual?

8. *As regards the Filipino diasporic experience, what do you perceive as challenges for the next 100 years?*

Prophecy is not my business, it's a hazardous undertaking. Still, for pedagogical purposes, I'll hazard this. If we have not yet been strangled by the smog and effluvium of a degraded environment in the next millennium and the deluge of consumer goods, the challenge for Filipino intellectuals—"intellectual" in the Gramscian sense

refers to anyone who has some critical, directive or mobilizing judgment, however minuscule—is how to reconstitute the Filipino "nation" from the dispersal of men and women who identify themselves as "Filipino" whether they are in Australia, Saudi Arabia, Alaska, Italy, Hong Kong, New York, or Makati. In other words, are we resigned to just being "domestic servants" of the globalized marketplace, which sadly is our current reputation?

We won't be a "chosen" people, to be sure, but we can all cooperate to generate that solidarity and intelligence required to destroy an exploitative system based on profit and alienated labor. This is not just mere "leftist" rhetoric because the everyday experience of domestic helpers and "entertainment" workers confirms this. Yes, despite all the postmodernist chic about globalization and the advent of the "netizen" (the emergent cyborg citizen of the Internet), the oppression of peripheral or subaltern nations by the sovereign powers of the West, the United States, and Japan, with their own "White supremacist" agendas, continues to determine the life-chances of peoples in the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, the Caribbean, African countries, and many countries in South America.

Filipinos will either resist the transnational Leviathan of technoconsumerism and assert their own national will and intransigent dignity—or they will prolong the servility of the last 400 years. Hopefully we can continue the socialist experiment that suffered disfigurement in the Soviet Union, China, and elsewhere, in more creative and original ways. We have great historic potential as Filipinos, but that is being denied or suppressed.

9. *You said you write poetry primarily in Filipino now? Why and how does that affect the substance and form of your own poetry?*

Ah, yes, I mined the lyrical inspiration in English up to the bitter end, from the halcyon days in high school reading Villa up



to the 1960s and the explosion of the Cultural Revolution in China, in the Philippines, and elsewhere. That particular mother lode was long exhausted, figuratively and literally. The limits of T. S. Eliot's *Wasteland* or of Allen Ginsberg's *Howl* could not be transcended by mere poetic technique and bohemian postcolonial mimicry; only revolution can save the poet in English from solipsism, selling his soul to politicians and business, and suicide—this has been the real future for certain contemporaries in my lifetime.

Why choose Pilipino, or “Filipino”? Primarily because the poet who writes in English in the Philippines has no real responsive or even potentially cooperative audience and will have none, as the trend goes. The writers in English today write for a coterie, or for their admirers, extended ritual kin, and patrons if not for their own pathetic selves. There's a lesson for writers in other societies plagued with multiple languages organically rooted in profound racial, national, religious, and class inequalities.

What I mean by audience is not just readers but people whose experiences and life-forms provide the materials, intonation, rhythm, repertoire of dispositions, imagery, and body-language for the poet and who are the potential (if not actual) receivers of the subliminal and intellectual charge in poetry and other verbal/linguistic performances.

✓ English has no future in the Philippines—unless it is artificially supported by the neocolonial clientele of transnational corporate power led at present by the US hegemonic bloc—as the living speech of the masses. I don't mean here that it is, by some intrinsic virtue, the language of the colonizer—after all, the Communist Party of the Philippines conducts its propaganda and education in English, and in various vernaculars. Even in French, Dutch, and Japanese, as varying circumstances demand.

It may be argued that English of a sort is now the speech of the overseas contract workers, but Japanese and Arabic are really more

useful for many of them. And, of course, one should not forget the universal language of dollars and Euros.

Let me cite an example from my activist inventory. During the 1960s and 1970s, when we were active in the anti-martial law movement, the most popular poems read in most meetings and conferences were Amado V. Hernandez's poem in Filipino, *Lumuha Ka, Aking Bayan* and Jose Corazon de Jesus's lyrics for the song, “Bayan Ko.” It's not just a question of historical exigency and political pragmatism. There's also the human collective hunger and desire for the renewal of memory, dreams, solidarities, obsessions, and the imagination of the future. It's a question of discovering your humanity, your collective agency together, seemingly trapped in a racist and sexist and brutalizing system, bereft of the critical universality that can fuse the singular and the general, the local and cosmopolitan.

Ultimately it's a matter of resurrection (please don't confuse this with “born-again” fundamentalism) in a milieu of vulgar egoism and mindless consumerism. We, writers in English, were petty bourgeois intellectuals reborn in the campaign to “serve the people!” (to use the Maoist slogan). But what is national or popular need to be constructed by collective action—it's not given, like mushrooms, or decreed by fate or any cosmic, demiurge providence.

Thanks to the US civil rights movement, George Jackson, the *Red Book*, Che Guevara, and the antiwar movement, I discovered the rich praxis and tradition of Western Marxism—Georg Lukacs, Antonio Gramsci, Walter Benjamin, Wilhelm Reich, Henri Lefebvre, Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, among others. But thanks more to the ordinary folk who died in Mendiola and in many parts of the Philippines, the thousands of victims of extrajudicial killings and forced disappearances, we (privileged children of the middle strata) realized that we had to commit “class suicide” and integrate with what Benedict Spinoza calls the “multitude.” ✓



Back to belles lettres! When you are writing for a living audience in an emergency—and for people of color, every day is an emergency (we don't have to read Frankfurt Critical Theory on this)—you write “in situation,” as Sartre would say. Your speech becomes more integrally a part of an ongoing process of communication, dramatic or dialogical in a genuine sense, than if you were writing in English usually addressing your self, or versions of your own poetic persona—a species of narcissistic, masturbatory indulgence.

{ Today, certainly, postmodernists would claim that you can't tell now which is genuine and which is fake—everything is a simulacrum! Nonetheless, there is the alternative route for artists of color. Self-fetishism may be replaced with the kind of poems Bertolt Brecht called teaching/learning poems, not utilitarian or simply pragmatic, but tested and feasible equipment for the survival and strengthening of the spirit. “Arm the spirit” was one of the slogans of the 1960s youth movement. Brecht's achievement, just as those of Pablo Neruda and Cesar Vallejo, has become something of a model for many writers, young and old, in the Philippines today.

We are open to knowing and appreciating all cultures from anywhere in the world that may be useful in the national liberation struggle. We also have indigenous sources and local inspiration from our own history and tradition. But I am neither a nativist postcolonial subaltern nor a cosmopolitan world-citizen, just a Filipino activist trying to Filipinize the Marxist-Leninist practice of freedom in acts of social transformation, in a sustained, principled collaboration with others at home and around the world.

This has been said before, but let me repeat it for this occasion. I believe that only in meeting the challenge of freeing society, from the alienation and exploitation endemic to a market system based on profit, can the artists and writers recover the humanistic (in a materialist sense) and truly revolutionizing power of art. In short,

we shall be reconstructing a society in which art and literature are organic parts of the life-forms we invent for ourselves in the process of objectifying our possibilities together with our fellow humans and with nature.

We need to reinscribe art and literature in the concretely determinate sociohistorical contexts from which they derive their blood and flesh, their reason for existence. Only in this perspective can we also understand the logic of the aesthetic revolt (Charles Baudelaire, Ruben Dario, Jorge Luis Borges) against bourgeois society: art for art's sake!

10. *Please share any other reflections you may have, given the Philippines' centennial commemoration.*

A hundred years of suffering and resistance are over, now let us welcome another hundred years of struggle, of defeats and victories! This may sound like an old Faustian theme from the Western canon, or a sick repetition of Don Quixote's song from the kitsch musical. Our struggle is not nationalist in the narrow sense, it's a worldwide struggle for social emancipation from a global systemic enemy: capital accumulation and its ideology of White patriarchal supremacy.

Let's consider the fact that Malaysia and other countries in the Pacific Rim continue to regard the Philippine Revolution of 1896, with Rizal and the propagandists, as one harbinger of the days of national liberation movements in the 1950s and 1960s for Malaysia, Indonesia, IndoChina, even India. Remember that Mariano Ponce and other Aguinaldo survivors (General Artemio Ricarte, among others) had good relations with Sun Yat-sen and other Asian progressives.

And the resistance against US aggression in 1899–1902 in the Filipino-American War had enduring resonance in Cuba and many Latin American countries reacting against years of US interven-

tion since the Monroe doctrine. We're a small country in those tiny islands out there, but geopolitics operates in geometric ways. Thus our struggle for national democracy and genuine independence becomes central and exemplary insofar as we are mounting the most formidable challenge to the mightiest "superpower" on the planet at this time in history.

The Philippine Revolution of 1896 may have been defeated—that's why comrades of the First Quarter Storm in 1970 call it "unfinished"—but its example lives on. Revolutions proceed through defeats and setbacks, as they say, and the future springs from the carnage of the present and the ruins of the past.

We Filipinos in "the belly of the beast," as the Cuban hero Jose Marti called the United States at the turn of the century, need to reconnect not only with the 1896 revolution, the sacrifices of Mabini, Sakay, Crisanto Evangelista, the Huk, and the New People's Army, but with current struggles today in order to recover sources of hope and energy for the task of reconstituting the deracinated Filipino community in the United States as well as the commodified civil society of the neocolony.

It's not just the delirium of the other within you that needs to be released, as deconstructionists would say; it's also the actual others around you—the dynamic living network of your associates—where you find your possibilities, your future. Your integrity also. You can only find the meaning of your life in solidarity with others as you build a future in which possibilities repressed today can be given a chance to flourish in a just, egalitarian order. That commitment is not a matter of postponement or deferral, but an actual endeavor to live dangerously but also astutely every moment of the day. It's actually the project you try to realize in a whole lifetime.

Lest I sound existentialist in the dilettantish sense, I end with a tribute to Salud Algabre, the woman who led the Sakdal rebellion in the 1930s and who was inspired by Pedro Calosa, a Colorum

leader who learned the art of the mass strike in the Hawaii plantations of the 1920s.

Algabre's words need to be remembered: "No uprising fails. Each one is a step in the right direction."

And I might add, quoting the Chinese writer Lu Hsun, "If each one walks along that path, then we shall have built a road where none existed before." May a thousand paths flourish, more than a hundred flowers bloom, in our united long march to a liberated Filipinas!